

provide free primary health care to those so desperately in need of it. Most of the doctors I approached liked the idea, so long as their life savings wouldn't be put at risk by malpractice suits. They also wanted to be relicensed without a long, bureaucratic hassle. It took one year and plenty of persistence, but I was able to persuade the state legislature to create a special license for doctors volunteering in not-for-profit clinics, and got full malpractice coverage for everyone from South Carolina's Joint Underwriting Association for only \$5,000 a year.

The town donated land, local residents contributed office and medical equipment and some of the potential patients volunteered their weekends stuccoing the building that would become the clinic. We named it Volunteers in Medicine and we opened its doors in 1994, fully staffed by retired physicians, nurses, dentists and chiropractors as well as nearly 150 lay volunteers. That year we had 5,000 patient visits; last year we had 16,000.

Somehow word of what we were doing got around. Soon we were fielding phone calls from retired physicians all over the country, asking for help in starting VIM clinics in their communities. We did the best we could—there are now 15 other clinics operating—but we couldn't keep up with the need. Yet last month I think my father's words found their way up north, to McNeil Consumer Healthcare, the maker of Tylenol. A major grant from McNeil will allow us to respond to these requests and help establish other free clinics in communities around the country.

According to statistics, there are 150,000 retired doctors and 400,000 retired nurses somewhere out there, many of them itching to practice medicine again. Since I heeded my dad's words, my golf handicap has risen from a 16 to a 26 and my leisure time has evaporated into 60-hour weeks of unpaid work, but my energy level has increased and there is a satisfaction in my life that wasn't there before. In one of those paradoxes of life, I have benefited more from Volunteers in Medicine than my patients have.

This Father's Day, of course, my dad is not around. And my children are all grown and out on their own. But now I remind them the best way to celebrate this holiday is by listening and responding to their grandfather's question: "What did you do for someone today?" That's my father's most valuable legacy—to me and my children.●

IN RECOGNITION OF JACOB MELLINGER

● Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Jacob Mellinger of New Jersey, who will soon be celebrating his 100th birthday. Mr. Mellinger will reach this momentous milestone on July 5th of this year, and I would like to acknowledge this special moment.

Jacob Mellinger emigrated to the United States at the tender age of six, from Remenyia, Austria-Hungary. Since then, Mr. Mellinger has lived a life full of accomplishment, compassion and service. Upon graduating from the New Jersey Law School in 1927, he went on to build a successful law practice that lasted for 60 years. During that time, he established himself as an outstanding practitioner of the law and he also earned the right to argue cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. However, he has also used his success to

serve his community. He has demonstrated his generous nature by distinguishing himself as a strong supporter of several prominent charities, including the United Jewish Appeal and Hadassah.

I wish Mr. Mellinger the best on his 100th birthday. As he and his family reflect on this joyous occasion it is my sincere hope that he will continue to share his wisdom from the last century with his family and friends for many more years to come.●

THE REVEREND PHILIP BRANON

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermont is a very small State with special people. For those of us who live there we have the opportunity to get to know many within our State. One who has given his life to the people of his community and parish is Father Philip Branon and I would like my colleagues to have the opportunity to read this recent article about him that was in the *Burlington Free Press* on April 8, 2001.

The article follows:

VT. PRIEST CELEBRATES 50 YEARS ON THE JOB
(By Sally Pollak)

SOUTH HERO—Philip Branon was a teenager when the priest at his local church, St. Patrick in Fairfield, called him into the rectory and suggested he consider the priesthood.

"It must be because I was a pious child," the Rev. Branon said, laughing at the thought, "Or maybe my mother told him to. I don't know."

If it were his mother's idea it was a sound one, the right choice for the sixth of 10 Branon children—a Fairfield farmboy who still associates Sunday Mass with morning chores.

Branon, 74, will mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood Wednesday. He has spent more than half that time—30 years—serving the Catholic community of Grand Isle County, celebrating Mass, comforting the dying, baptizing babies. He joins one other Vermont priest, the Rev. George Dupuis of Arlington, who is still active after half a century.

If Branon anticipated 50 years of anything, it was nothing more than living.

"I'm just very grateful that I have lived for the 50 years, and that I have good health," Branon said. "I also have the wonderful privilege of being brought up in a good family with a lot of help and warmth from my brothers and sisters."

Branon celebrated his first Mass on April 15, 1951, reciting the service in Latin in St. Patrick Church, his childhood parish. The Rev. William Tennien, the pastor who suggested Branon's priesthood, shepherded Burlington drivers who couldn't get through the muddy Franklin County roads to the event.

OVER THE YEARS

Since that first service, Branon has celebrated more than 17,000 Masses, an average of seven a week. He will say once again this morning, at St. Joseph Church in Grand Isle, one of three churches in his parish. The service will be followed by a celebration of his priesthood.

Alice Toth, a South Hero teacher, plans to attend. She has been a parishioner at St. Rose in South Hero, Branon's home church, for 33 years. Toth appreciates his "special gift" for reaching the elderly and ill.

"He's a very caring pastor," she said. "And he's a true Vermonter in the sense that he's

really close to nature in his sermon and his message."

Branon's first church was St. Paul in Barton. Then Mass was in Latin and his sermons were delivered in French and English.

He had no choice: He was informed by the Bishop that he would not be ordained if he didn't learn French.

He picked up sufficient French in conversation with other students at St. John's Seminary in Boston, "I got along well in Barton," he said. "Even though I didn't always know what I was saying."

Branon became the pastor at the University of Vermont's Newman Center in 1957, and served there for 14 years. He called it "the best place a priest could be" when the changes of Vatican II were introduced.

At UVM, bringing together his two loves—family and the Church—he asked a woodworker from the Fairfield hills, Frank Moran, to carve a crucifix from a piece of black cherry that belonged to Branon's father. It remains at the chapel today.

GOOD VERMONT STOCK

Thirty years ago, Branon moved to the Champlain Islands, where he lives in South Hero and serves three island churches. He has chosen to stay because he loves where he lives, has firm roots in the community, and is not far from family and his childhood home.

"His contributions to the islands cannot be overestimated," said Max Reader, the retired pastor of the Congregational Church in South Hero.

"He's down to earth," Reader said, "He's quite honest and he's very understanding. He's of good old Vermont stock and he's just got all these good qualities that make him a very, very fine priest."

Branon feels that perhaps his most important contributions are made at funerals. He estimates that he has presided over 15 to 20 during each of the last 30 years.

"I'd rather do funerals than weddings anytime," he said Thursday morning after Mass. "At a funeral, it's all honest. It's really and truly a teachable moment, the best chance for a priest to talk to a number of people who don't go to church."

He considers the most important part of his job bringing Communion and comfort to the elderly and ill who can't get to church. Thursday after Mass, Branon—a slow walker and deliberate talker—placed a bible and some bread in his Chevy Corsica and prepared for a dozen Communion house calls.

"It comes down to the purpose of our ministry," he said. "The purpose of the priesthood is to help people go to heaven. When you're dealing with sick people and old people, you're pretty apt to be dealing with people who are close to it."

"Over the years, you find out that sick people know they're sick. You try to help people understand it, help them face death."

The deaths are not only a time for comfort and compassion, but a chance to learn about the families who live on the islands. "If I had written down two or three lines about every person I buried," Branon said, "I'd have a wonderful history of the islands."

FARMING FAMILY

The history of the Church and his family are of great importance to Branon. His family has been farming in Fairfield for about 130 years, working a farm that was started by his great-grandmother, Mary O'Neill Branon.

She was widowed in the 1860s when her blacksmith husband, Irish immigrant Anthony Branon, was killed by the kick of a horse. Mary Branon took her two children and walked 17 miles from Swanton to Fairfield, driving cattle as she went.

Branon and his nine siblings—seven brothers and two sisters—grew up on the nearby